



Summary

- The Agriculture (Retained EU Law and Data) (Scotland) Bill is needed to ensure a smooth transition as the UK exits the EU at the end of 2020.
- However, given that the Bill covers critical years (from 2021-26) in which time Scottish agriculture needs to be halfway towards meeting Scotland's ambitious 2030 climate target, the Bill must set an overall direction of travel for farmers and crofters and support activity that delivers good environmental outcomes.
- **LINK members strongly support amendment 21 (Colin Smyth, supported by John Finnie and Oliver Mundell)** which sets out a purpose for the allocation of future agricultural subsidies to support activities that would lead to a net-zero transformation in agriculture and support nature.
- **LINK members strongly support amendments 23 and 24 (Colin Smyth)** to gather data to inform a future National Food Plan.

1. Amendment 21 – purposes clause

Since the Bill was introduced, Scottish Environment LINK members have argued that MSPs must seize the opportunity to signal how regulations and related funding for agriculture will change in the years ahead.¹ This is critical, as the years covered by the Bill will take Scotland halfway towards meeting its ambitious 2030 climate target and in that same time a transformation in the agriculture sector, a major contributor to Scotland's current greenhouse gas emissions², must occur.

The Bill grants Scottish Ministers extensive additional powers to amend the operation of the Common Agricultural Policy from 2021 onwards when this policy ceases to apply in Scotland. LINK urges the Scottish Parliament to agree a purpose for the allocation of future agricultural support and any related schemes and measures designed to deliver such support.

Amendment 21 sets out a [list of objectives](#) which the future agricultural subsidy system replacing the CAP must be directed towards. This includes increasing the resilience of the sector to climate change; encouraging innovation, productivity and profitability for farming businesses; enhancing biodiversity and animal welfare; and facilitating local food supply chains. Future subsidies, and other secondary regulations, must contribute toward at least one objective listed while not undermining any other.

At Stage 2, the Scottish Government indicated that a purposes clause could cut across work to inform future farming policy being undertaken by an expert group, as had been agreed by Parliament in January 2019. The group was due to publish its recommendations in this summer however, with the

¹ LINK written evidence, January 2020: <https://www.scotlink.org/publication/agriculture-retained-eu-law-and-data-scotland-bill-written-evidence/>

² UK Committee on Climate Change, 2019. *Reducing emissions in Scotland – 2019 Progress Report to the Scottish Parliament*. <https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/reducing-emissions-in-scotland-2019-progress-report-to-parliament/>



publication delayed, it is understood the findings will not be available ahead of Stage 3 of this Bill. In the absence of the group's recommendations to inform the direction of future farming policy, we believe a purposes clause is essential to include in legislation at this critical time for Scottish agriculture.

Directing the purpose of future regulations in this way ensures that the agriculture sector will continue in its transformation to net-zero practices while delivering resilient agricultural businesses in a strong rural economy. It clarifies the direction Scotland's agriculture sector will move in, giving reassurance to farmers and crofters and allowing for medium to long-term business planning.

Between now and 2026, Scotland must develop an entirely new agricultural support system and it is crucial the next five years lay the groundwork for a transition to a system that delivers broad benefits for society, climate and nature. Amendment 21 (Colin Smyth) sets out the broad policy direction for that future work and LINK strongly urges MSPs support it at Stage 3.

2. Amendments 23 and 24 – national food plan

The Covid-19 pandemic has shown how vulnerable our food system is to shocks and the importance of increasing resilience to deal with future crises. In the face of a sustained economic downturn following lockdown restrictions, demanding climate change targets and the need to create new, resilient supply chains following Brexit, it is vital Scotland plans for improvements in its food system. Following the delay to proposals for a Good Food Nation Bill, **LINK members strongly support amendments 23 and 24 to enable the collection of data to inform a future national food plan.**

This response represents the collective view of LINK's [Food and Farming Group](#). Members may also respond individually in order to raise more detailed issues that are important to their particular organisation.

Scottish Environment LINK is the forum for Scotland's voluntary environment community, with 40 member bodies representing a broad spectrum of environmental interests with the common goal of contributing to a more environmentally sustainable society.

For more information contact:

Vhairi Tollan
LINK Advocacy Manager
vhairi@scotlink.org
0131 225 4345